

IIC - Situation in the Countryside  
December 1969

31 Oct 69      Laurence Lynn to Vietnam Working Group memo re Vietnam Special Studies Group Activity (initiating a study on Pacification: The Situation in South Vietnam's Countryside and a study on Enemy Capabilities: The VC/NVA Manpower Situation  
  
Attachments: Kissinger to DCI (and various) memo, dated 16 Sep 69, re NSDM 23, Vietnam Special Studies Group (establishment of VSSG)  
  
Vietnam Working Group Membership  
  
STATINTL      The Problem: VC/NVA Manpower Indicators  
  
1 Nov 69      [redacted] Memo for Record re Vietnam Special Studies Group Subcommittee on Conditions in the Countryside: Initial Meeting 31 Oct 69 (Agenda attached)  
  
STATINTL  
  
15 Dec 69      Lt. Col. Paul Donovan (JCS) to [redacted] (and various) memo re Analysis of the Situation in the Countryside (draft working paper attached)  
  
15 Dec 69      Robert Sansom (NSC) to VSSG Countryside Panel re 16 December Meeting/Draft Paper (attached)  
  
23 Dec 69      OER to Robert Sansom memo re CIA Comments on Conclusions Section of Countryside Paper

**JCS,NSC REVIEWS COMPLETED**

*Please return D/1*

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Robert Sansom

SUBJECT : CIA Comments on Conclusions Section of Countryside  
Paper

1. We are generally pleased with the Summary and Conclusions section of the Countryside paper; the task of pulling together disparate conclusions of 5 province studies is certainly most difficult, particularly against short deadlines. Although we have suggested several changes which we believe will improve the paper, we find no areas of major disagreement.

2. The Summary and Conclusions sections should be re-focused by separating the Summary section from the Conclusions. This Summary should be no more than two pages, and explain the purpose of the paper, the type of analysis used, and its major conclusions.

3. Our main difficulty with the conclusions section is that the reader is left somewhat unsatisfied and confused about the extent to which control is "explained" by the four major dependent variables. We suggest that both the Summary and the Conclusions should make clear the extent to which we are able to confidently explain control changes, and the extent to which we are unable to explain these changes. This could be done by highlighting areas of uncertainty and analytical weakness more prominently. For example, none of the province studies dealt with the role of ARVN in a definitive manner, chiefly because of

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the unavailability of this information in Washington. This weakness needs to be acknowledged before tentative conclusions about ARVN effectiveness or possibilities for Vietnamization can be made. Similarly, rather firm conclusions are made about the effectiveness of US tactics in Dinh Tuong and Long An Provinces; however, GVN control advanced at a similar rate in other delta provinces that did not have the benefit of US troops and airmobile tactics.

4. The discussion of Local Security Forces further illustrates the need for highlighting areas that demand more work. The roles and effectiveness of the RD cadres, PSDF, Provincial Reconnaissance Units, and National Police Field Force units are not even mentioned. Further, we are not sure which local security force activities or mix of activities are effective in extending GVN control.

5. The distinction between the concepts of security and control could be made sharper by devising a separate security indicator -- using selected HES activity-oriented questions similar to the control indicator. It is also possible that this "pure security" indicator would have some interesting analytical payoffs, such as possibly leading control changes by several months.

6. It would seem that we need to make clear the arbitrary nature of our definitions of what levels of military and political influence constitute GVN or VC control. As we pointed out in our draft, our definition shows VC control all but trampled out in Binh Dinh, yet

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very substantial numbers of local forces and guerrillas are still being raised and supported from the local population. Perhaps we should also say more about the "gray" area under the influence of both sides, and the Communists apparent easy access to these people.

7. The discussion of the role of main forces might be easier to understand if both the Allied and Communist sides were discussed together. The province studies indicate that the manner in which these forces interact by tying down or deterring each other is a major determinant of control, rather than their individual presence or tactics.

8. The strategy and tactics paragraphs do not mention the relationship (or lack of relationship) of the levels of friendly and enemy military activity to control. This might be the place to make the point that the presence of friendly and enemy forces is more important than their levels of activity.

9. We will hold our other specific comments (most of which are editorial) until we are able to get together in a re-drafting session.

CIA/CER  
23 December 1969

*[Handwritten Signature]*

11 of 21 pages

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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With Attachment

December 15, 1969.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VSSG COUNTRYSIDE PANEL

FROM: Robert L. Sansom *RLS*

SUBJECT: 16 December Meeting/Draft Paper.

Attached is my draft, developed from LTC Donovan's original, of the first two parts of the countryside paper. We can discuss the draft at Tuesday's meeting.

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15 December 1969

DRAFT - WORKING PAPER  
CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

INTRODUCTION

This paper:

- Identifies meaningful measures of conditions in the countryside,
- Examines how these measures have changed over the 1967-1969 period,
- Discusses, on the basis of countryside data, those factors that may have caused the changes in the general conditions observed. These factors are:
  - friendly and enemy main forces,
  - friendly and enemy local security forces,
  - enemy strategy and tactics, and
  - other factors such as political support and military support (e.g. air and artillery).
- Analyses, on the basis of selected province studies, the relative roles played by the just cited factors in bringing about changes in conditions in the countryside.

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### MEASURES OF CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

#### SECURITY

We have traditionally judged conditions in the countryside in terms of security. A hamlet is judged secure to the degree that it is protected from enemy initiated intimidation and violence against the people and property of the hamlet.

#### Security Indicators

The most commonly used measure of security is the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). This system classifies the population, hamlet by hamlet, into one of five rated categories, A through E, and a sixth grouping called VC population. District advisors, at the end of each month, rate all hamlets in their districts, except those completely controlled by the Viet Cong, on a scale A through E for nine indicators of enemy and friendly strengths and activity.\* The average of these nine indicators is called the security score or rating.

Chart 1 on the following page shows how the HES security score for South Vietnam's rural population has changed from 1967 to the present.

Since A+B security ratings reflect an almost total absence of enemy military activity and presence and a substantial GVN presence, the A+B category is considered to be GVN secure. Hamlets rated C are considered to be GVN relatively secure. Relatively secure or C hamlets may be subjected to a substantial amount of Viet Cong activity, usually at night.

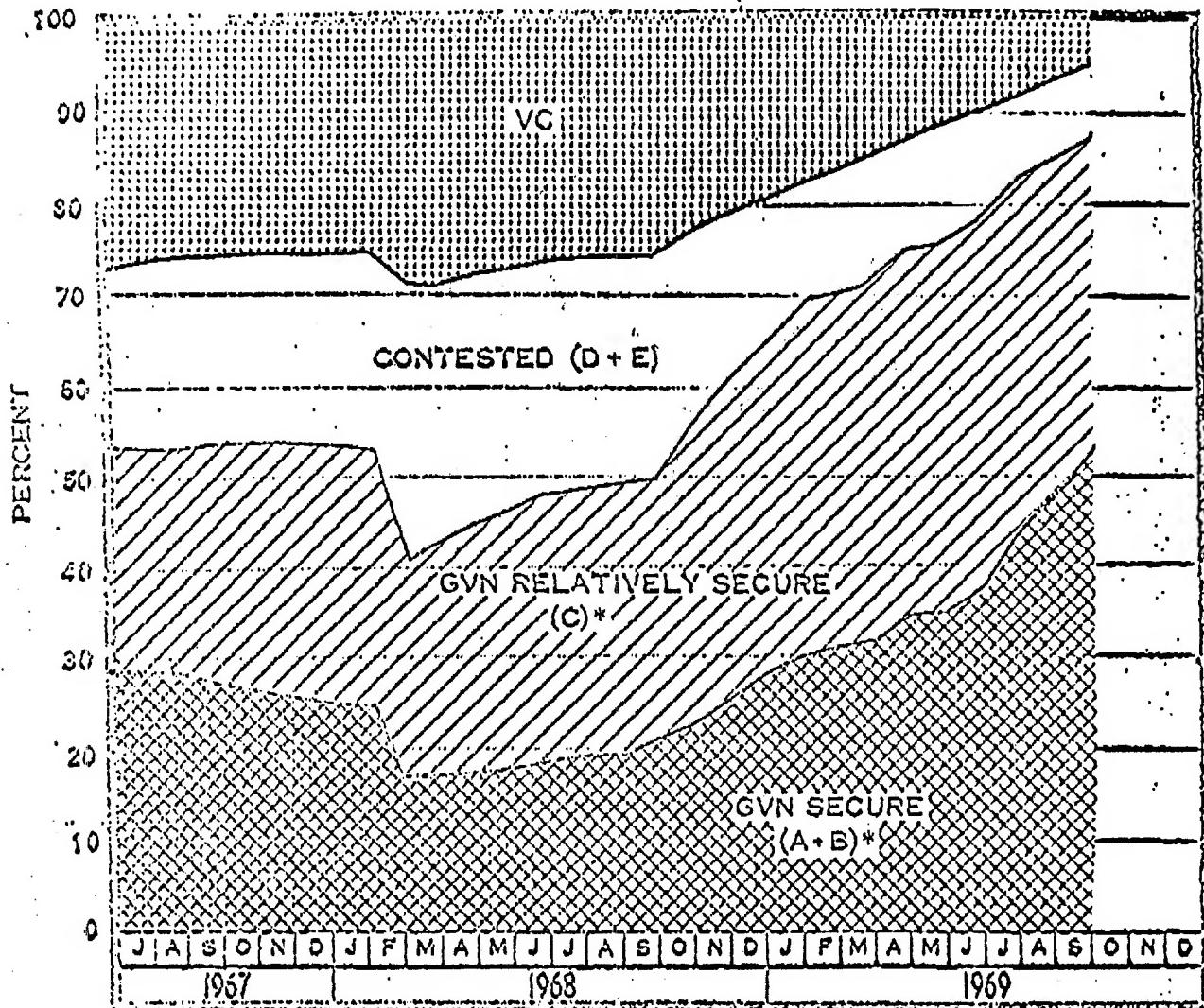
\*TAB A contains details on the individual indicators of the HES system. The advisor also rates hamlets for nine development indicators. Taken together, the eighteen indicators (nine security + 9 development) constitute the overall HES rating.

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CHART 1

RURAL POPULATION -- SOUTH VIETNAM

PERCENT OF POPULATION RATED BY 9 HES SECURITY INDICATORS



\* CONSIDERED TO BE WITHIN GVN SECURITY

by MACV

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The population rated GVN secure (A + B) is more meaningful because the district advisor has more knowledge of conditions in the most secure hamlets. He, therefore, is capable of making a comparatively definitive judgement for A and B hamlets (whereas a portion of the C hamlets simply are hamlets that do not measure up to A and B criteria).

The GVN has negligible access to the population rated VC. The contested (or D + E) population is subject to very substantial and regular Viet Cong activity.

Uses of Security Indicators

The advantage of a security indicator is that it should be very sensitive to enemy activity. Thus, any move on the part of the enemy to improve his position should be detected by measures of security.

In Chart 1 we see a clear demonstration of this important characteristic of the security indicator. The GVN secure population began to decrease in September 1967, as early as four months before the Tet offensive of February 1968. (Note however, that the population A+B+C did not decrease over the same period, supporting the statement above concerning

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the less-well-defined nature of the "C" population.)<sup>1</sup>

However, this advantage of a security indicator -- its sensitivity to enemy activity -- is also its chief limitation: that is, because it measures activity, it can be misleading if used as a sign of enemy or friendly strength.

If the enemy chooses to lay low, security will improve, but this should not necessarily be taken as an indication that the enemy's strength has declined.

CONTROL

In order to supplement the available security indicators, a control indicator was devised that would measure absolute strength of the GVN and Viet Cong at the hamlet level.

The concept behind the control indicator is that both the GVN and Viet Cong exercise control through political and military organizations and activities at the hamlet level. Moreover, at a certain level of organizational strength on the part of one side in a hamlet, the other side is effectively excluded from exercising control over the same hamlet. Therefore, the

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The HES 18 indicator security-development score actually rose before Tet 1968 due to the fact that those sub-indicators measuring new development activities of the GVN more than offset the decline in security indicators caused by increased Viet Cong activity.

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appropriate measure of control is that level of political and military strength that either side must have before it can be said to control the hamlet at the exclusion of the other side.

According to this definition, if the GVN has military and political influence in the hamlet by day and the Viet Cong at night, the hamlet cannot be said to be under the control of either side.

The following definitions were used for GVN and Viet Cong control:

GVN Control:

- Military: the hamlet is protected by adequate security forces.
- Political: GVN officials are resident in the hamlet overnight.

Viet Cong Control:

- Military: Either village guerrillas are combat effective and VC defenses largely intact, or the hamlet is subject to platoon attack from within the village or from an area not more than two hours distance from the hamlet
- Political: The VC hamlet infrastructure is in complete control or seriously inhibits GVN activities in the hamlet.

Chart 2 on the following page shows the proportion of South Vietnam's rural population under GVN and Viet Cong control. The results show that the GVN currently has political and military control over 54.7% of the rural

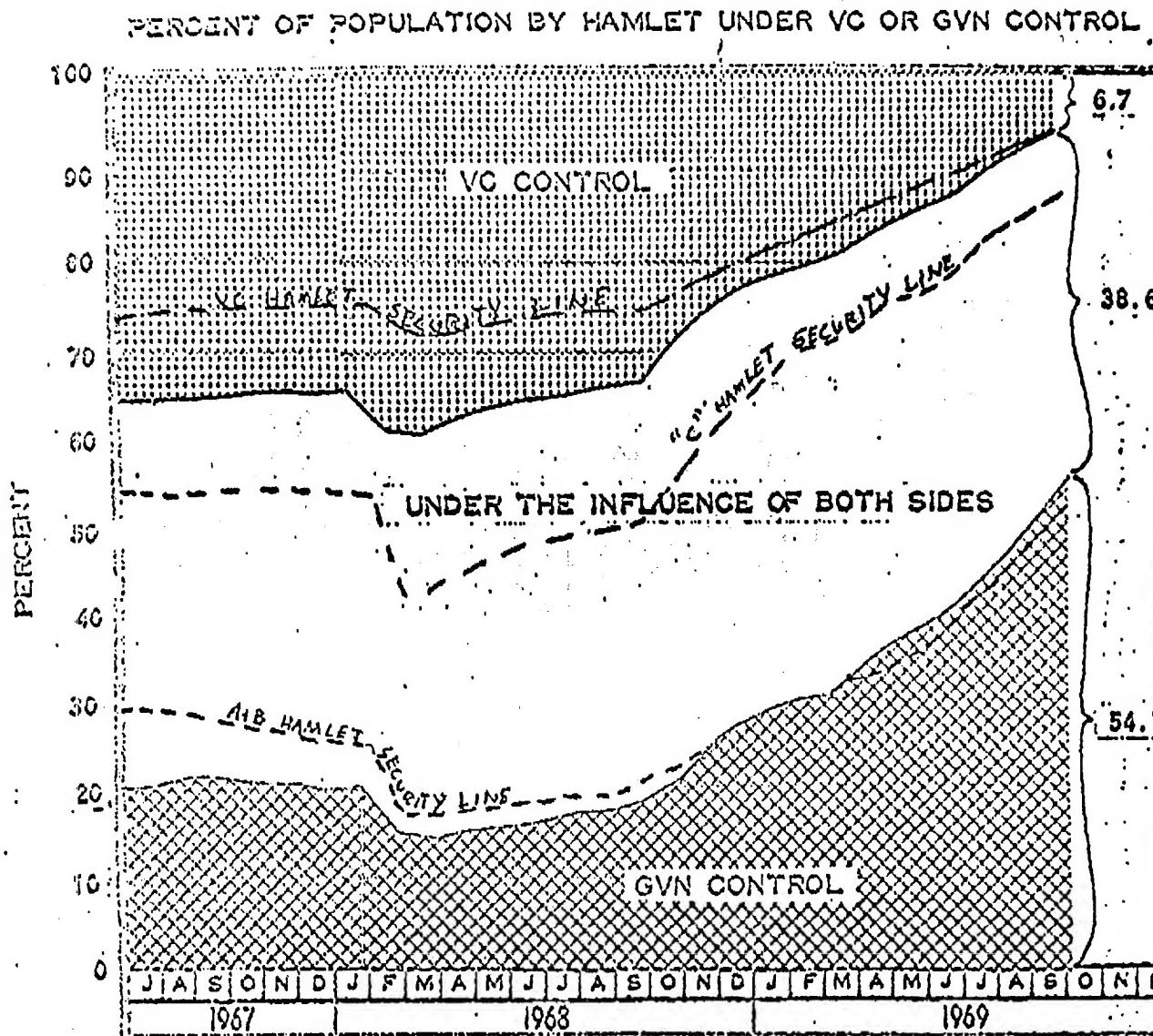
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These criteria are measured by four HES indicators. For a more detailed definition of the criteria for measurement of control see TAB B.

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CHART 2  
RURAL POPULATION -- SOUTH VIETNAM



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population. The Viet Cong control 6.7%, and 38.6% of the rural population is under the influence of both sides.

The Chart also shows how the control situation differs from the security situation.

We see that:

- the Viet Cong have had significantly greater control than security; in fact they <sup>have</sup> controlled a substantial portion of the hamlets rated by the security indicators as contested. Thus, until recently, the Viet Cong have had more control than their activities would have led us to believe. (The GVN controls no contested hamlets.)
- The GVN controls very few of the security-rated "C" hamlets.
- While the A+B security score fell before Tet, reflecting increased VC activity, the GVN control score did not change significantly, showing that the (A+B) security score is a better measure of activity.
- More recently, the fact that the GVN's control line has moved slightly out in front of the A+B security line, whereas before the Tet offensive it was as much as 10% below the security line, suggests that the GVN is now achieving control gains in areas subject to low levels of Viet Cong activity. This probably results from the GVN deployment of a great number of local security forces (RF and PF) over the last 12 months.

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It should be noted that if in any hamlet Viet Cong and GVN leaders had reached an accommodation, such would not be detected by the measure of control. Moreover, if the Viet Cong were able to adopt the cover of GVN officials by, for example, winning an election, a village rated under GVN control could actually be under Viet Cong control.\*

Influence

In an effort to describe the conditions of that portion of the population not under the control of either side, measures relative influence were devised.

Influence results from military, political, and economic activity by either side. To measure GVN and VC influence twelve of the HES indicators of military, political, and economic strength and activity were selected.\*\*

The GVN control results and the population under the influence of both sides, determined using the criteria just mentioned are shown in Chart 3.

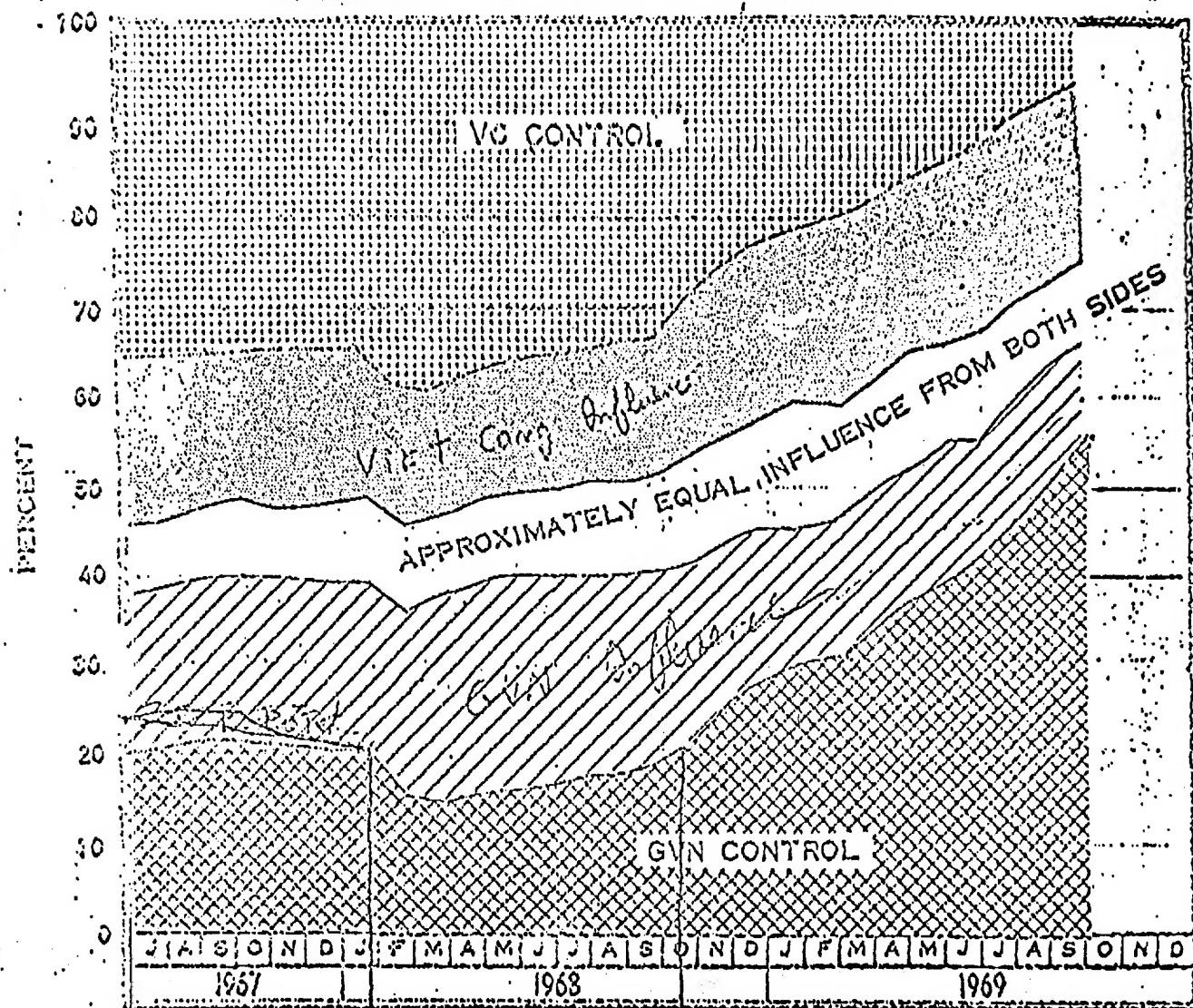
\* In order to preclude such occurrences, additional measures can be employed as cross-checks to insure that the control situation observed is genuine. For example, the extent of GVN intelligence activity within the hamlet might be employed to test whether a hamlet suspected of having reached an accommodation with the Viet Cong or of being under covert VC political control, is in fact under VC control.

\*\* For details of the indicators selected and the methodology of categorization see TAB C.

CHART 3

RURAL POPULATION -- SOUTH VIETNAM

PERCENT OF POPULATION BY HAMLET UNDER VARYING  
DEGREES OF INFLUENCE BY BOTH SIDES



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FACTORS AFFECTING CONDITIONS IN THE  
COUNTRYSIDE

For the purposes of the analysis to follow, the January, 1967-September, 1969 period is divided into the following phases:

- Control Stalemate: period up to January, 1968,
- The Vietcong General Offensive: January 31, 1968 to October 15, 1968,
- The GVN Control Upswing: October 15, 1968 to present.

Control Stalemate -

The countryside control situation was relatively unchanged from January, 1967 until the January 31, 1968 Tet offensive. Collateral evidence indicates that the extent of GVN control countrywide as of January, 1967 was probably not significantly different from what it was in 1964. In other words, the control stalemate lasted from 1964 until the Tet offensive, largely because, after 1965, the focus of each side's efforts was on the main force war in the relatively unpopulated areas of South Vietnam.

During this period the Viet Cong controlled about 35% of the rural population compared with about 20% controlled by the GVN. Forty-five percent was under the influence of both sides.

The Viet Cong General Offensive -

After an extensive mobilization which took place from November 1967 through January, 1968, the VC/NVA launched their general offensive at

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Tet 1968. (As noted earlier, these preparatory efforts were detected by the security indicator.) The Viet Cong objective was to set off a general uprising in the GVN controlled cities, force and persuade the Vietnamese army to defect, and gain control of the country. The Tet offensive was just one phase of the general offensive. Mobilization efforts continued well into 1968 resulting in the less successful but similarly motivated offensives of May and August 1968. These phases are clearly delineated by the attack indicators in Chart 4.

The effect of the general offensive, primarily targeted on urban areas, on the control situation in the rural areas was marked although not profound. During the Tet offensive GVN control fell by 5% and Viet Cong control rose by about 7%. But over half of these losses were recovered by October 1968, despite the May and August offensives.

#### The GVN Control Upswing

In October and November 1968, following 60 days of the lowest levels of enemy activity in over a year, GVN control began to increase. This rate of increase almost doubled during the accelerated pacification campaign (APC) period of November, 1968 through January, 1969. Thereafter the GVN continued to achieve control gains at a high rate through September 1969 when they controlled 54.7% of the rural population. Over the GVN upswing period, Viet Cong control fell from about 35% to about 7%. During this period the intensity of enemy attacks never approached that of the Tet or May offensives of 1968 although it rose to relatively high level through the first six months of 1969.

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It is probable that we are entering a new phase in the war:

- there is evidence that the enemy has embarked on a new strategy (COSVN 9, intensified covert activities, etc),
- the rate of North Vietnamese infiltration has increased,
- U.S. troop withdrawals have taken place and more are likely to follow,
- the GVN continues to press ahead with pacification, but the emphasis has changed from expansion to consolidation.

Our objective is to develop an analytical understanding of what might happen to the control situation during this next phase by analyzing the influence of key factors on control. These key factors are:

- friendly and enemy main forces,
- friendly and enemy local security forces,
- changes in enemy strategy and tactics, and
- changes in other factors such as political support and indirect military support (e.g. air and artillery support).

The analysis will be on the basis of detailed case studies of selected provinces. However, before presenting the results of these studies, it is important to establish how these key factors changed country-wide over the 1967-1969 period.

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Main Forces

Main forces are those forces predominately engaged in conventional combat activities, usually performed in battalion or larger units.<sup>1</sup>

Friendly Main Force Strengths - The trend in friendly main force strengths from December, 1967 to September, 1969 is shown below:

Friendly Main Force Strengths (000's)

|             | <u>Dec 67</u> | <u>Jun 68</u> | <u>Dec 68</u> | <u>Jun 69</u> | <u>Sept 69</u> |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| GVN         | 343           | 403           | 427           | 451           | 468            |
| U.S.        | 486           | 535           | 536           | 539           | 509            |
| 3rd Country | <u>59</u>     | <u>62</u>     | <u>66</u>     | <u>72</u>     | <u>69</u>      |
| TOTAL       | 868           | 1,000         | 1,029         | 1,026         | 1,046          |

We see that:

-- since December, 1967 allied main force strength has increased 18%, while over the GVN upswing period, it increased by 5%.

-- South Vietnamese forces have increased 36% in less than two years,

-- U.S. forces peaked at 545,000 in early 1969 and fell to 509,000 by September, 1969.

<sup>1</sup> including maneuver units, combat support elements, and all related support services.

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Enemy Main Force Strengths - VC/NVA main force strengths  
are shown below:

Enemy Main Force Strengths (000's)

|                         | <u>Dec 67</u> | <u>Jun 68</u> | <u>Dec 68</u> | <u>Jun 69</u> | <u>Sept 69</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| VC/NVA Main Forces      | 122           | 137           | 117           | 108           | 94             |
| Administrative Services | 75-100        | 60-80         | 60-80         | 60-80         | 60-80          |
| TOTAL                   | 197-222       | 197-217       | 177-197       | 168-188       | 154-174        |

We see a 22% decline in the enemy's main force strength between December, 1967 and September, 1969.

Comparison of Friendly and Enemy Main Forces - The ratio of friendly-to-enemy main forces rose from 4.2 to 1 at the end of 1967 to 6.3 to 1 in September 1969 (see Chart 4). It is probable that this ratio will decline in the future because:

- U.S. troop withdrawals will probably continue,
- North Vietnamese infiltration is up, and
- the size of ARVN is not scheduled to increase noticeably.

Maneuver Battalions - Another way of measuring comparative main force capability is in terms of maneuver battalions. The number of enemy and friendly maneuver battalions are compared below:

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Maneuver Battalions

|                       | <u>Dec 67</u> | <u>Jun 68</u> | <u>Dec 68</u> | <u>Jun 69</u> | <u>Sept 69</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| ARVN                  | 154           | 161           | 166           | 168           | 168            |
| U.S.                  | 98            | 108           | 107           | 106           | 98             |
| 3rd Country           | 26            | 26            | 28            | 31            | 31             |
| <u>Friendly TOTAL</u> | <u>278</u>    | <u>295</u>    | <u>301</u>    | <u>305</u>    | <u>297</u>     |
| <u>TOTAL VC/NVA</u>   | <u>200</u>    | <u>274</u>    | <u>269</u>    | <u>290</u>    | <u>290</u>     |

Ratio: Friendly-Enemy 1.4-1 1.1-1 1.1-1 1.1-1 1.0-1

The enemy increased his number of maneuver battalions in early 1968 during the general offensive, although since that time - and throughout the GVN control upswing - the maneuver battalion ratio has not changed.

This constancy in the maneuver battalion ratio after mid-1968 obscures an important change. The size of the average enemy maneuver battalion fell from between 400 and 500 at the time to between 200 to 300 men in late 1969. Allied maneuver battalion strength has remained steady at between 700 to 800 men. Thus, throughout the GVN control upswing, enemy maneuver battalions have been at very low strength levels. It may be significant that despite the fact that the enemy's main force strength has fallen sharply, he

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has not chosen to consolidate his diminished strength in fewer battalions. Thus he retains a larger number of battalion units which may be strengthened by infiltrated North Vietnamese manpower.

Local Security Forces

Changes in local security forces for the period in question are seen below:

Local Security Forces (000's) [tentative figures]

|                         | <u>Dec 67</u> | <u>Jun 68</u> | <u>Dec 68</u> | <u>Jun 69</u> | <u>Sept 69</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| <u>GVN</u> <sup>a</sup> | 353           | 423           | 460           | 493           | 529            |
| <u>VC</u> <sup>b</sup>  | 145-175       | 130-185       | 116-155       | 102-142       | 90-130         |
| Ratio                   | —             | —             | —             | —             | —              |

<sup>a</sup> Includes: RF deployed in local security role, PF, ...

<sup>b</sup> Includes: guerrillas, ...

The results show that GVN local security forces have increased by 50% since late 1967, and by 25% over the period of GVN upswing. These increases are due to the 55% increase in RF-PF strength since late 1967. In addition, RF-PF forces who in 1967 fought with World War II vintage weapons, now are 80-90% armed with M-16's.

During the GVN upswing period, enemy local security force strength fell by about 20%. In Chart 4 these results are summarized in the form of a force ratio which increased from \_\_\_\_\_ in December, 1967 to \_\_\_\_\_ in September, 1969.

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Enemy Strategy and Tactics

It has already been noted that the level of enemy attacks was high from September, 1967 through September, 1968, that is immediately before and throughout the Viet Cong general offensive.

Over the period of GVN upswing in late 1968, enemy attacks were at first at a very low level (see Table below), but over the first half of 1969 they rose to a moderately high level, although the GVN continued to register control gains. However, the number of battalion or larger attacks has remained low since the general offensive.

Average Number of Enemy-Initiated  
Incidents Per Month

| Type                                  | Second Half<br>1967 | First Half<br>1968 | Second Half<br>1968 | First Half<br>1969 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Battalion or<br>larger attack         | 4.0                 | 13.0               | 4.2                 | 4.2                |
| Other attacks                         | 249                 | 435                | 174                 | 362                |
| Harassment,<br>terrorism,<br>sabotage | 1600                | 1700               | 800                 | 1400               |

A more detailed breakout of enemy initiated attacks shows that in 1969 the enemy shifted the emphasis of his attacks from ground attacks to attacks by fire (see Chart 4). This suggests he has been following economy-of-force tactics.

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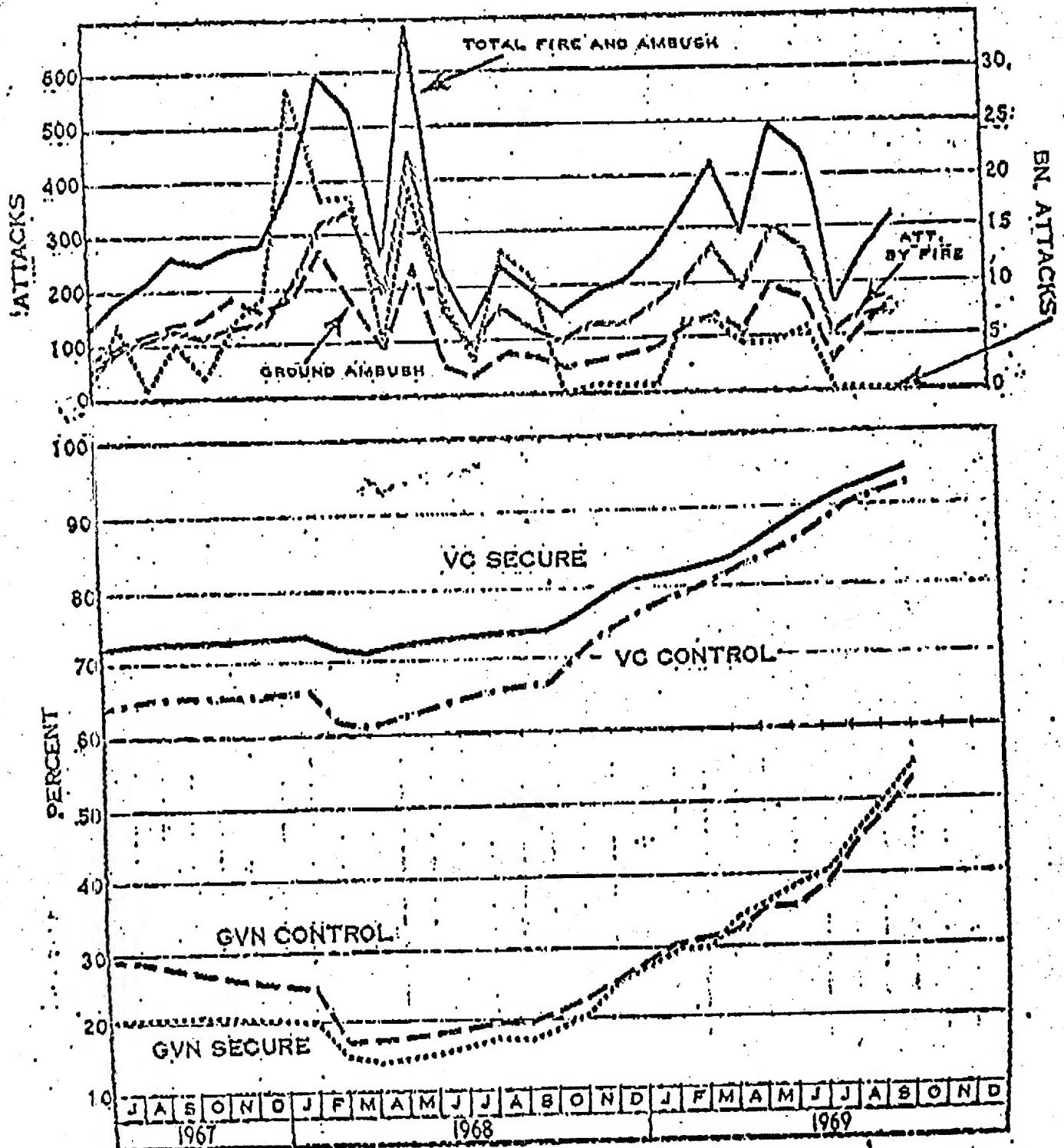
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Other Factors - There are no available countryside data on political support that would indicate that changes in political attitude influenced the control situation. Nor are our indirect military support indicators (air and artillery support) refined enough to permit generalization about its' possible influence on the control changes observed. These factors, along with the main and local force factors and changes enemy strategy and tactics are analyzed in the following section as they affected the control situation in the following provinces (see attached map):

- Thua Thien
- Binh Dinh
- Long An
- Dinh Tuong, and
- Chuong Thien

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THE JOINT STAFF

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

15 December 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

Subject: Analysis of the Situation in the Countryside

Attached is revised portion of subject paper  
for consideration at panel meeting on 16 December  
1969.

*Paul Donovan*  
PAUL DONOVAN  
LTC USA

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Attachment  
a/s

12 December 1969

DRAFT - WORKING PAPER  
CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

PART I

SUMMARY

(TO BE WRITTEN)

PART II

INTRODUCTION

This paper:

- Identifies meaningful measures of conditions in the countryside,
- Examines how these measures have changed over the 1967-1969 period,
- Discusses, on the basis of countrywide data those factors that may have caused the changes in the general conditions observed. These factors are:
  - friendly and enemy main forces
  - friendly and enemy local security forces
  - enemy strategy and tactics, and
  - other factors such as political support and military support (e.g. air and artillery)

PART III

MEASURES OF CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Selected as measures of government (GVN and VC) involvement and population commitment were the terms; security and control, and related measures of influence and support.

SECURITY

Security is a condition which results from the establishment and maintenance of protective measures which insure a degree of protection from hostile acts or influence.

We have traditionally considered the population in the countryside in terms of security. The most commonly used measure of security is the MACV Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). This system classifies the population, hamlet by hamlet, into one of five rated categories, A through E, and a sixth grouping called VC population. District advisors, at the end of each month, rate all hamlets in the district, which have some GVN presence, on a scale A through E for nine indicators of enemy and friendly strengths and activity.\* The unweighted average

\*TAB A contains some details of the indicators of the rating system. The advisor also rates hamlets for nine development indicators. Taken together, the eighteen indicators (nine security and nine development) are more commonly used as the "overall" HES rating.

of these nine indicators is called the security score or rating.

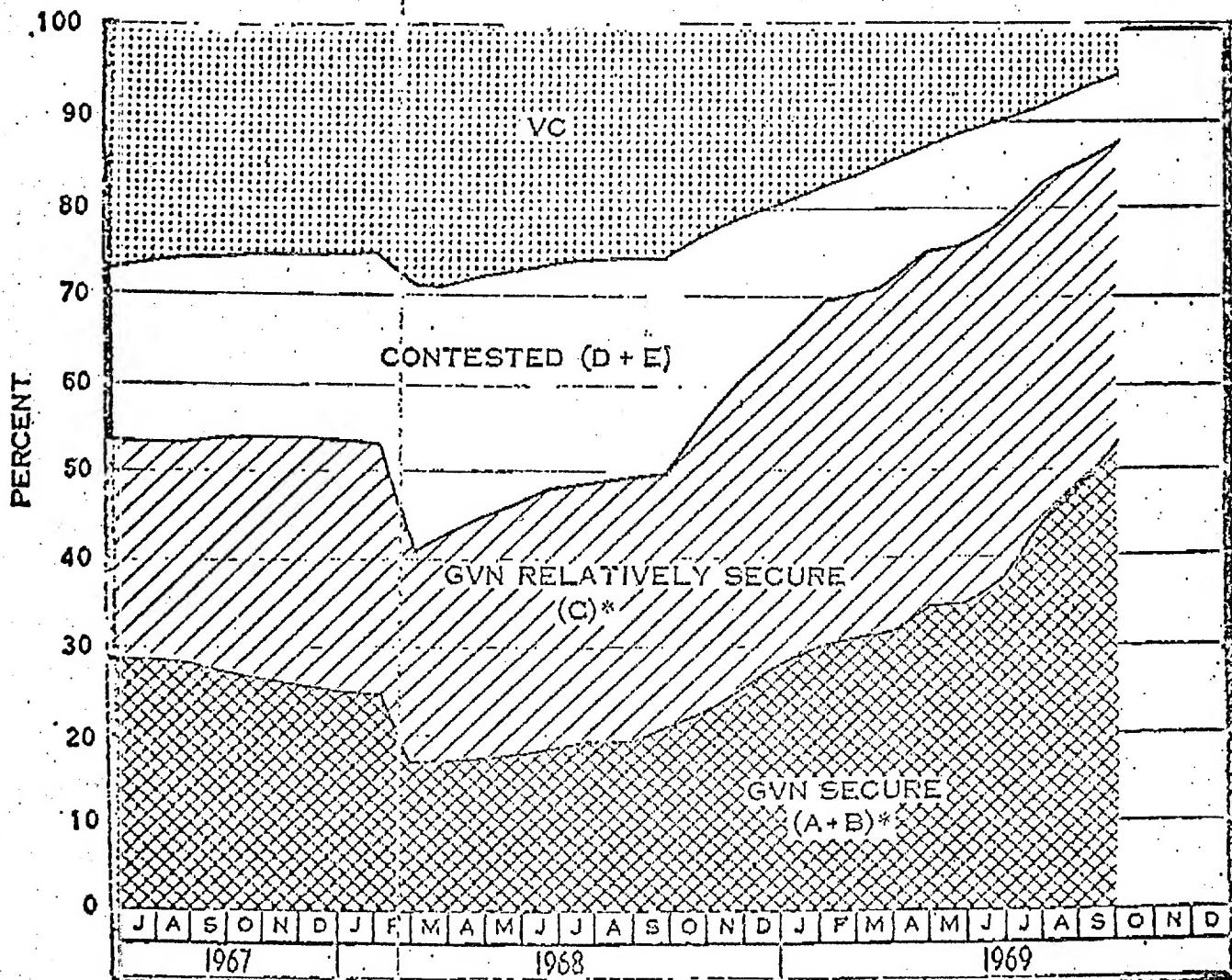
The percentage of rural population of South Vietnam by security rating over time is shown on Chart 1. Population rated A, B, or C is considered to be within GVN security by MACV. However, a hamlet rated C for security, although it may have adequate security forces and plans, also has some amount of VC/NVA activity/capability to contend with. Such a rating usually means that the population is overtly protected by the GVN (or other allied force) but that the population, individually and collectively, is not far removed from both covert and overt, the latter usually at night, enemy reprisals.

The population rated A or B for security is more meaningful because the district advisor has more knowledge of conditions in the most secure hamlets. He, therefore, is capable of making a comparatively definitive judgement for A and B hamlets, whereas a portion of the C hamlets simply are hamlets that do not measure up to A and B criteria. Since A and B security ratings reflect an almost total absence of enemy military activity and presence and a substantial GVN military presence, hamlets with A or B security ratings are considered to be GVN secure.

Hamlets rated D, E, or VC, denoting inadequate GVN security and significant enemy activity and/or capability, may be grouped to provide an aggregate measure

CHART 1  
RURAL POPULATION -- SOUTH VIETNAM

PERCENT OF POPULATION RATED BY 9 HES SECURITY INDICATORS



\* CONSIDERED TO BE WITHIN GVN SECURITY

This population, outside of the pale of adequate GVN security, is for the most part contained in much smaller and more widely dispersed hamlets than those rated A, B, or C. It will be a most difficult task to provide all these hamlets, many of which are near VC/NVA base areas and border sanctuaries, with adequate security. Because of their remoteness and small size, they should not significantly retard the GVN in military and political development even if they prove to be difficult to upgrade. However, those hamlets rated D, E, or VC, which, because of their number and location, threaten lines of communication to important population, farming and economic centers, such as in the delta area; must and are being given a high priority for upgrading.

The rural population rated GVN secure by the unweighted HES security indicators appears to be the most widely used and most meaningful measure of activity.

On Chart 1 we see a clear demonstration of the most important characteristic of the security indicator. The rural population rated A or B for security began to decrease in September 1967, as early as four months before the Tet offensive of February 1968. Note, however, that the population A, B, or C did not decrease over the same period.

CONTROL

Control is that level of combined political and military strength within the population that one contestant possesses which excludes effective similar strength of the other contestant.

The definition of control was designed to make it differ from security in three major areas. These are:

- Security is a measure of degree and is suitable for indicating changes in ratings and for trend analysis only.
- Security is highly dependent on enemy/friendly activity.
- Security measures GVN military strength and operations against VC/NVA strength, operations and political activity (due to including the rating of the VC infrastructure). The inclusion of the political aspect of VC, although it is a vital aspect of the total enemy strength, is only indirectly weighed against the GVN political activity.

In arriving at a measure that would avoid use the presently reported data series, absolute measures of strength, both military and political were needed. Further, such strength must be present to a significant degree. Finally, both participants (GVN versus VC/NVA) could not simultaneously have this strength in the same hamlets.

If the GVN has military and political activity in the hamlet by day and the Viet Cong at night, the hamlet cannot be said to be under the control of either side.

The measures for GVN control are:

- Military: The hamlet is protected by adequate security forces.
- Political: GVN officials are resident in the hamlet overnight.

The measures for VC control are:

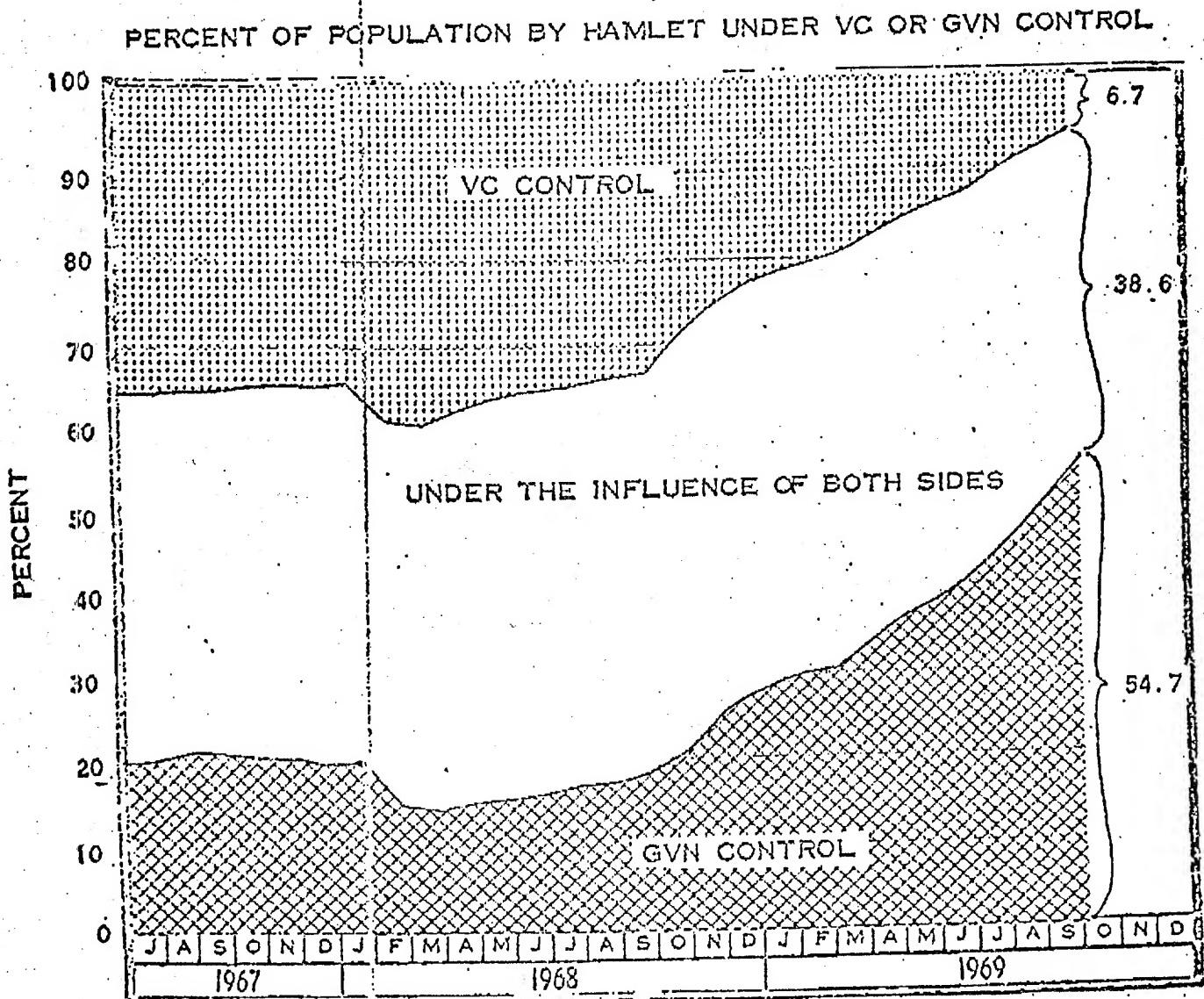
- Military: Either village guerrillas are combat effective and VC defenses are largely intact, or the hamlet is subject to platoon attack from within the village or from an area not more than two hours distance from the hamlet.
- Political: The VC hamlet infrastructure is in complete control of or seriously inhibits GVN activities in the hamlet.\*

As defined above the rural population of South Vietnam was measured over the same time period as was security. The outcome is shown in Chart 2. The results show that the GVN currently has political and military control over 54.7% of the rural population. The Viet Cong control 6.7%, and 38.6% of the rural population is under the influence of both sides.

\*These criteria are measured by four HES indicators. For a more rigorous definition of the criteria for measurement of control see TAB B.

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CHART 2  
RURAL POPULATION -- SOUTH VIETNAM



It should be noted that if in any hamlet the Viet Cong and GVN leaders had reached an accommodation, such would not be detected by the measure of control. Moreover, if the Viet Cong were able to adopt the cover of GVN officials by, for example, winning an election, a village rated under GVN control could actually be under Viet Cong control.\*

In an effort to describe the conditions of that portion of the population not under the control of either side the term influence is used.

Influence is a condition which results from combative and persuasive activity, military, political and economic, designed to establish control by and/or allegiance to one of the contestants.

To measure influence of both GVN and VC twelve of the HES indicators of military strength and activity, political strength, and economic activity were selected.\*\*

\*In order to preclude such occurrences, additional measures can be employed as cross-checks to insure that the control situation observed is genuine. For example, the extent of GVN intelligence activity within the hamlet might be employed to test whether a hamlet suspected of having reached an accommodation with the Viet Cong or of being under covert VC political control, is in fact under VC control.

\*\*For details of the indicators selected and the methodology of categorization see TAB C.

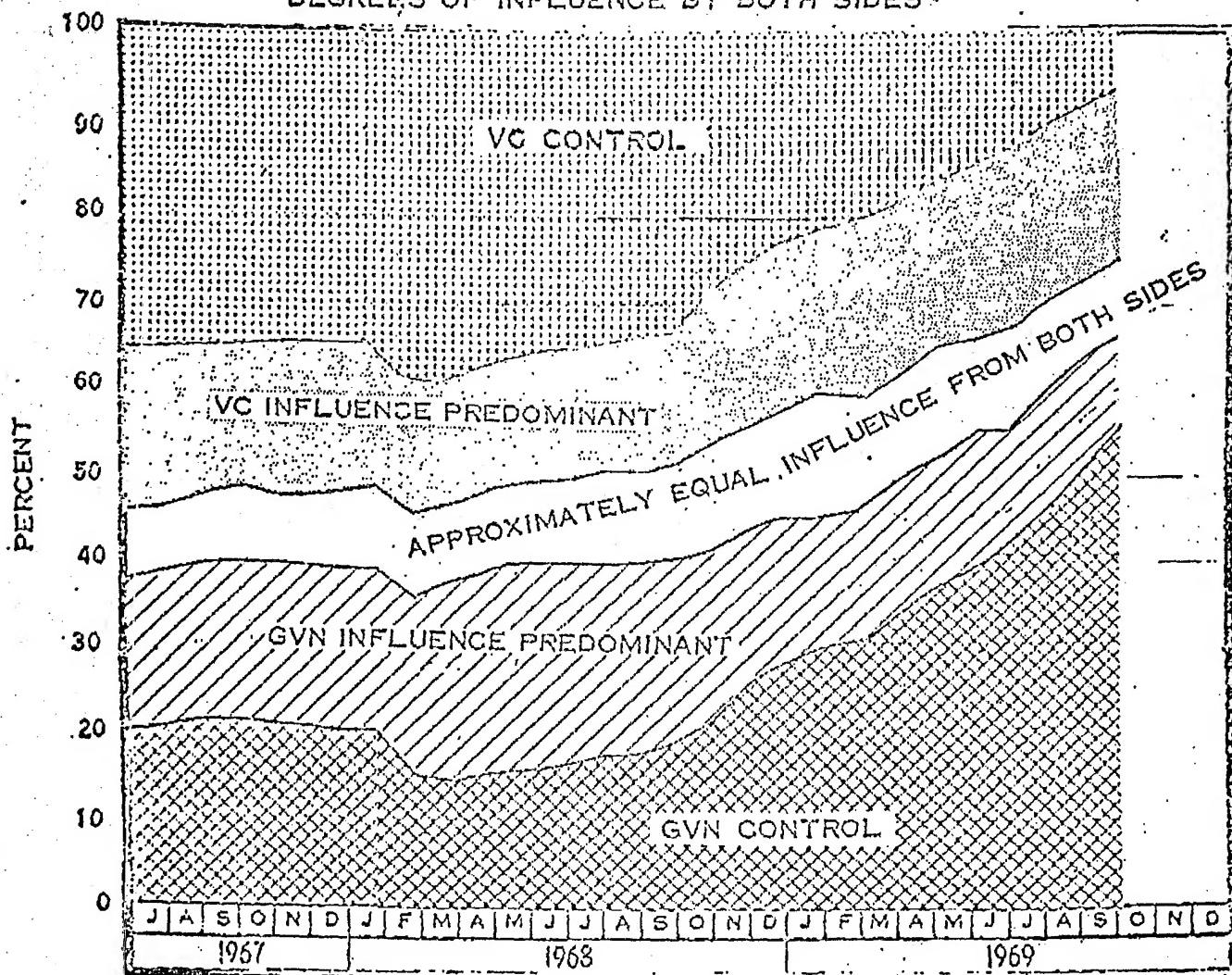
The GVN and VC controlled populations remain as described previously. Lacking definitive criteria for initial grouping at the beginning (July 1967) of the period examined, the initial distribution of the population as to influence was arbitrarily made in three groups as shown on Chart 3. It is interesting to note that the groupings of influence appear to be much more sensitive to change in activity. See, for example, the change evident in influence at the time of the June 1969 high point (Chart 3). No such change takes place in either GVN or VC control.

It is also interesting to note that the acquisition of population in terms of control by the GVN in 1969 appears to be more rapid than GVN ability to influence the population. This would indicate either that a future slowing down of the rate of progress of the GVN controlled population is likely, or that it is becoming increasingly easier for the GVN to gain control of the population. The latter case is more probable as a result of a "jumping on the band wagon" phenomenon.

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CHART 3  
RURAL POPULATION -- SOUTH VIETNAM

PERCENT OF POPULATION BY HAMLET UNDER VARYING  
DEGREES OF INFLUENCE BY BOTH SIDES \*



\* THE INITIAL JUL 67 GROUPING HAS BEEN MADE ARBITRARILY  
AT 40%, 20%, AND 40% WITHIN THE INFLUENCE CATEGORY.

PART IV

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SECURITY  
AND CONTROL

The definition of security and control lead us to some observations concerning their relationship.

- Adequate security is a prerequisite for the establishment of control.
- Security is highly dependent on the activity of the contestants. Control should not, since it is defined as a measure of strength, be dependent on activity except as that activity reflects changes in strength.
- With the exception of control, all measures are stated in terms of degree; e.g., GVN security is good or fair, VC influence is high or low. Control, on the other hand, cannot be exercised by the GVN and the VC at the same time since it is defined as a level of strength that precludes similar effective strength of the other side.
- The influence measure will be most meaningful, since, by measuring political military and economic activity (that leads to strength), we can determine the direction, in terms of control, in which segments of the population are leaning.

PART V

AN AGGREGATE ANALYSIS OF FACTORS  
AFFECTING CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Although the GVN has achieved major gains since September 1968, these gains were achieved over a period when certain factors which may have a substantial impact on the situation moved in the GVN's favor. To set the stage for the more important detailed analyses by province, we will assess the role of each of the major aggregate factors in bringing about the changes observed. Important changes in measures during the period July 1967 through September 1969 will be presented as they relate to the time intervals of:

- Pre-Tet, Jul 67-Jan 68
- Tet and May offensives, Feb 68-May 68
- Recovery Period, Jun 68-Oct 68
- 1968-1969 Upswing, Nov 69-present (Sep 69)

For the aggregate analysis the following four factors were examined:

- friendly and enemy main forces
- friendly and enemy local security forces, and
- changes in enemy strategy and tactics.

Pre-Tet

Chart 4 shows the first significant (though not large) change in the security rating of the rural population just prior to Tet 1968. Economic and political progress (not shown) was continuing during this period. The

drop in the security rating was three times as great as the control rating.

This change in security, by reflecting the change in enemy activity, preceded the forthcoming change in enemy strategy. The enemy activity during this period was preparatory and cover activity for the Tet offensive.

#### Tet and May Offensives 1968

The first major change in the control and security measures came with the 1968 Tet offensive and its aftermath, when GVN control dropped sharply from a level of 20% to about 15%. Security at the same time dropped seven percentage points. Although not depicted on Chart 4, a significant factor in addition to the activity during this period, is the presence of VC/NVA main force units among the populated areas. These areas, such as on the approaches to Saigon, dropped a significant amount in terms of security and control, although enemy overt activity was light within the great majority of the hamlets and villages. Thus, not only activity, but presence of enemy main force units has a significant effect on control and security.

The Tet offensive caused the significant reduction, and the May offensive, while not damaging the GVN position countrywide, nevertheless prevented recovery of the GVN pre-Tet position until October-November of that year. The

CHART 4  
( TO BE FURNISHED)

activity levels on Chart 4 indicate that if activity were the governing factor in control, control would have dropped significantly in May as well. Two conditions prevented such a drop. The first is that those hamlets considered barely within GVN control had left that category in February. There were fewer such hamlets that would easily regress. Second, the enemy objective was not directed against the rural population in as widespread a manner as in Tet, but directed against the centers of the highly populated areas. Hence, in May 1969 while the overall security rating remained unchanged, control improved slightly.

#### Recovery

By October 1968 the GVN had recovered to its pre-Tet position. Change in factors (Chart 4) that could account for such improvement were:

- A significant reduction in enemy activity
- Removal of main force units into base camps and border sanctuaries
- A change in tactics that resulted in less battalion size attacks, less ground attacks and more attacks by fire.
- Increases in GVN local security forces with a resultant improvement in the friendly to enemy local force ratio.

Upswing

Since November 1968 there has been an unbroken improvement by the GVN on all fronts, with a concomitant reduction of the VC position. In this period the factors most responsible for the recovery continued to assert themselves. Although the most significant changes in factors were the continuing improvement of the local force ratio and the further decline in enemy activity, in these generally good times it is most difficult to select which of the factors had the most effect on improving measures of conditions in the countryside.

Therefore, within this frame work more detailed analyses of selected provinces were made. These are found at TABS A-H and are summarized in the following section.

PART V  
ANALYSES BY PROVINCE

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1 November 1969

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD**

SUBJECT: Vietnam Special Studies Group Subcommittee on Conditions  
in the Countryside: Initial Meeting 31 Oct 1969

1. The attached working paper was prepared by [redacted] 25X1A  
[redacted] for the meeting and served as a guide for discussion. The  
list of participants is also attached.

2. Indicator group assignments were made much as they were by the manpower Working Group Panel (WGP). Indicator group (IG) reports are to be ready by about COB Tuesday and exchanged for consideration on Wednesday. On Thursday the WGP will meet at 1000 in [ ] to rework the drafts.

3. MACV supplied indicator data will be included in the Phase I drafts but it was recognized that some may will have to be found to include MACV in the exercise at an early date. This will be discussed on Thursday.

4. Phase I IG reports and the subsequent WGP report will include somewhat more assessment than was envisioned by the manpower WGP. Discussion of the ability of the indicator to measure what it purports to measure will be included. The discussion of the significance of the indicator will not be included.

5. Overlap between the two WGP's was discussed and it was agreed that the manpower WGP would handle all enemy manpower indicators i.e. B. from the working paper. However, this IG for Enemy Defections of the Countryside WGP will report. The rationale was that defections is a proper countryside indicator and total desertions is the proper manpower indicator.

6. The countryside WGP expects MACV methodologies to be laid out and commented on. For example, it is expected that comments on the body count problem will be included in the manpower WGP's report on losses.

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7. The JCS representative brought up the subject of economic indicators. There followed a not too knowledgeable short discussion of possible indicators. At one point in this discussion I suggested that, inasmuch as [redacted] had initially defined "Conditions in the Countryside" as a political/security problem, economic indicators might be considered by a separate group. It was my impression that the group was responsive to the suggestion. However, [redacted] obviously wanted to defer the decision and the discussion ended with [redacted] stating that he would take up the matter of economic indicators with Lynn and Mendenhall (Administrator/Vietnam Bureau, AID).

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8. Whatever way this is handled OER should be involved. Ultimately any economic indicator evaluates programs if only in a secondary way. Persons other than -- or in addition to -- the program managers need to be involved in this kind of assessment.

9. Some comments on individual indicators.

a. OSD/SA has done some work on the indicator file breaking down incidents by the number of KIA. I am not certain whether this is Allied or enemy.

b. I suggested that RVNAF manpower acquisitions ought to be included with desertions. In this context Bob Sansom brought up RF/PF and PSDF which will also be included.



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S E C R E T

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VIETNAM SPECIAL STUDIES GROUP:

Subcommittee on Conditions in the Countryside

AGENDA FOR INITIAL MEETING: 31 October 1969

I. APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM

- A. Immediate Task is to outline the present data situation (Tables 1 & 2) -- 10 November 1969 deadline.
- B. Subsequent Tasks are: (1) To respond to the request for the development of alternative indicators; and (2) To respond to the requirement for an Assessment of the situation in the countryside consistent with the data available.

II. DATA SERIES UNDER CONSIDERATION AND PROPOSED ASSIGNMENTS OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR RESPONSES

- A. Enemy Initiated Incidents - (DIA)
- B. Enemy Defections (Chieu Hoi/Hoi Chanh) - (State/JCS)
- C. SVN Desertions - (OASD/JCS) *and recruiting*
- D. HES - (CIA/OASD)
- E. Enemy KIA - (JCS)
- F. GVN Officials killed and kidnapped - (State)
- G. VCI Neutralizations - (CIA)
- H. Weapons Losses - (JCS)
- I. Elections - (State)
- J. Peoples Revolutionary Committees - (State/CIA)
- K. Refugees - (State)
- L. LOC Security - (DIA/JCS)
- M. *SVN Monitors (SAC) NTI/EAS/OSD/ISA*

III. TYPE OF RESPONSES REQUIRED (TABLES 1 & 2)

- A. Definitional and/or criteria background for data series, changes in criteria where they have occurred.
- B. Assessment of accuracy and reliability of the data.
- C. Ability of the data series to measure a variable directly or indirectly.
- D. Assessment of data series: Relevance and other factors bearing on its usefulness, such as: Timeliness, consistency, etc.

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- E. Presentation of the data series from its initiation.
- F. Assessment of the level of aggregation at which the data series is most accurate, reliable, and relevant; i.e., Country, Corps, Province, etc.
- G. Assessment of the value of the data series as an index as opposed to an absolute indicator.

NOTE: Responses are not required to be in table form, particularly if this format is so restrictive as to obscure the distinction between the simple and the simplistic.

**IV. SCHEDULING OF RESPONSES**

- A. Responses for the information requested in Section III are desired by 4 November.
- B. On 6 November the Joint response will be circulated for concurrence. A Meeting on that date should: (1) Resolve any residual differences and (2) Permit scheduling of our remaining tasks.

FP

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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October 31, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VIETNAM WORKING GROUP

FROM: Laurence E. Lynn, Jr.

SUBJECT: Vietnam Special Studies Group Activity

In September 16, the President directed through NSDM 23 the formation of a Vietnam Special Studies Group (Tab A).

This Group held its first meeting on October 20 and directed the initiation of studies of two topics:

-- Pacification: The Situation in South Vietnam's Countryside.

-- Enemy Capabilities: The VC/NVA Manpower Situation.

To supervise the completion of these studies, the Vietnam Special Studies Group formed a Working Group comprised of members designated by the individual agencies (Tab B).

The Vietnam Working Group held its first meeting on October 30. During this meeting, it discussed the study approach to be taken on the two assigned topics.

The general approach decided upon was to analyze each topic in two stages:

-- The first stage of each study will focus on understanding the manpower and pacification indicators themselves.

-- The second stage will explain and interpret the levels and changes in the indicators.

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For each study, an ad hoc interagency group has been formed to further define the study approach and organize for the necessary work ahead. When completed, the study guidelines will be distributed to ensure the full participation of each agency and its components. The expected date of completion of the first stage of the study will fall in mid-November.

Enclosures

Tab A-NSDM 23

Tab B-Working Group Members

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*Lynn*

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

September 16, 1969

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National Security Decision Memorandum 23

TO:           The Secretary of State  
                The Secretary of Defense  
                The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT:      Vietnam Special Studies Group

In order to more systematically assess the facts upon which Vietnam policy decisions should be based, the President has directed the formation of a Vietnam Special Studies Group.

This group will:

- sponsor and direct on a continuous basis systematic analyses of U.S. programs and activities in Vietnam,
- undertake special analytical studies on a priority basis as required to support broad policy and related program decisions,
- provide a forum for and encourage systematic inter-agency analysis of U.S. programs and activities in Vietnam.

The Group will meet as necessary to initiate and review studies and to supervise the preparations of issues papers for consideration by the President and the National Security Council. The Group will conduct its affairs without prejudice to the existing interdepartmental framework concerned with day-to-day operational matters on Vietnam.

The membership of the Vietnam Special Studies Group shall include:

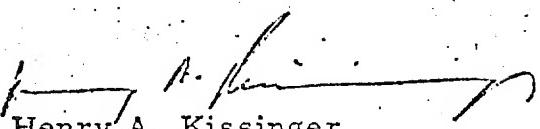
- The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (Chairman)
- The Under Secretary of State
- The Deputy Secretary of Defense
- The Director of Central Intelligence
- The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

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Depending on the issue under consideration, other agencies shall be represented at the discretion of the Chairman.

  
Henry A. Kissinger

cc: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

VIETNAM WORKING GROUP  
MEMBERSHIP<sup>1</sup>

NSC:           Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., Chairman  
                John Court  
                Robert Sansom

State:         Charles Cook  
                Louis Sarris

DOD:         BG George Blanchard  
                BG Jacob Glick  
                Colonel Mulcahy

CIA



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<sup>1</sup> Other members join as appropriate.

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TAB B

The Problem: VC/NVA Manpower Indicators

Our assessment of enemy capabilities and intentions in Vietnam is often based on indicators of VC/NVA manpower. However, the unequivocal interpretation of these indicators is difficult if not impossible. The main problems encountered seem to be:

-- The sources of information, methodology, and accuracy of the estimation process or alternative estimates are often not explicit.

-- The interpretation of changes in the indicators is often difficult because of inadequate knowledge of the relative importance of statistical errors, seasonal influences, and enemy capabilities or intentions in causing the observed changes.

Much effort has been spent on resolving these difficulties and considerable progress has been made. However, the remaining uncertainties are not insubstantial. The following examples should illustrate the uncertainties faced by the policy makers:

-- The difference between infiltration estimates. While all available indicators show that the arrival of infiltrators has fallen from 1968 levels, the estimates differ by a factor of three in their estimates of 1969 infiltration.

-- The difference between estimates of VC recruiting. At least one estimate shows that recruiting in 1969 has continued at 1968 levels; other estimates show a significant decline in recruiting.

-- The difference between "order of battle" estimates. The various OB estimates differ significantly in the levels and, more importantly, the rate of change in enemy capabilities over the last year.

These differences are indicative of the difficulty of estimating the VC/NVA manpower indicators. While there is no reason to expect or force agreement on the exact values of these indicators, there is every reason to expect that the evidence, methodology, and accuracy of each alternative indicator can be evaluated to reach the best factual understanding possible of enemy capabilities and intentions.

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The Study Purpose

The initial purpose of the study of VC/NVA manpower indicators is to clarify the basis for the estimates and to reach a common basis for understanding them.

### The Study Approach

The study approach will be comprehensive in scope, covering all indicators related to VC/NVA manpower from 1964 through the present in South Vietnam, Laos, and North Vietnam.

The first stage of the study will focus on understanding the evidence, methodology, and accuracy of the indicators rather than the interpretation of changes in them. The suggested format for this part of the study is shown in Table 1 for enemy force levels and changes in South Vietnam. Other formats will be developed for guidance on the analysis of enemy manpower resources.

The second stage of the study will analyze the significance of changes in the manpower indicators and the relative importance of the many factors causing changes including statistical errors, seasonal factors, and changes in enemy capabilities.

### Study Submission

To complete the first stage of the study, two groups are needed:

A Working Group Panel. A small group will be formed to determine the indicators to be studied, give further guidance to the study effort, and integrate the findings of the groups studying individual indicators.

Indicator Groups. For each indicator, an individual or a small group will be given responsibility for preparing a report on that indicator. Their findings will be supervised and reviewed by the Working Panel prior to preparation of a report to the Working Group.

The initial reports by the indicator groups should be submitted by November 10th to the Panel for compilation of the report on the first stage of the study.

Table 1  
Indicators of VC/NVA Manpower Levels and Changes in South Vietnam

| <u>Indicator</u>       | <u>Definition</u>      | <u>Source of Data</u> | <u>Reliability of Data</u> | <u>Methodology of Estimate</u> | <u>Precision of Estimate</u> | <u>Estimates of Manpower Indicators</u> |              |               |                   |                     |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---|--------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|
|                        |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              | <u>Beginning Strength</u>               | <u>Gains</u> | <u>Losses</u> | <u>Net Change</u> | <u>End Strength</u> |
| <u>Level</u>           |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| Main Force             |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| Local Force            |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| Guerillas              |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| etc.                   |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| vol                    |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| <u>Change (Gains)</u>  |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| Infiltration           |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| Recruitment            | <del>Recruitment</del> |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| <u>Change (Losses)</u> |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| Killed                 |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| Captured               |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| Deserted               |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |
| etc.                   |                        |                       |                            |                                |                              |   |              |               |                   |                     |